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Riley, John F.

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PROPOSED ANNEXATION OF HAWAII.

# SPEECH

OF

# HON. JOHN F. RIXEY,

OF VIRGINIA,

IN THE

## HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

SATURDAY, JUNE 11, 1898.

WASHINGTON
1898.

# SPEECH

OF

# HON. JOHN F. RIXEY.

On the joint resolution (H. Res. 259) to provide for annexing the Hawaiian Islands to the United States.

Mr. RIXEY said:

Mr. SPEAKER: I am not one of those who hold to such restriction of the powers of the General Government which would forbid our having a foreign policy, but believe that in all matters which concern our foreign relations this Government has all the attributes of sovereignty and the powers necessary for the conduct of its foreign relations and further expansion or contraction of our territory.

This Government has the power to "punish piracies and felonies committed on the high seas and offenses against the laws of nations." It has power "to declare war," "to raise and equip armies and navies," and "to make treaties with foreign nations."

The States are expressly prohibited from declaring war or entering into a treaty, alliance, or confederation. Control over the foreign policy of the Government is expressly ceded to the General Government, and carries with it, in my judgment, the accompanying right to all the powers of a nation in its fullest sense.

I doubt not, therefore, the power of Congress to acquire or annex territory and to provide for its control and government in any manner that it sees proper.

It is said that our Constitution does not anticipate the control of any territory not desirable for statehood. While such may have been the intention of the framers of the Constitution, about which we can not speak with certainty, it is not so "nominated in the bond," and as I construe the Constitution, it has full power as to its foreign policy, and the only check is the will of the people. Any other view would make us a "feeble folk" among the nations of the world. I am for upholding the doctrine of State rights within its legitimate sphere, but our foreign policy is expressly given in the amplest terms to the General Government, and it is wise to concede to that Government in its treatment of foreign questions whatever powers are necessary to meet the exigencies and emergencies as they arise.

My hesitation to lend support to the annexation of the Hawaiian Islands and my opposition to the policy of conquest and of permanent occupation and control of territory in the Eastern Hemisphere are not based on the idea of restrictions in the Constitution, but upon reasons of domestic economy and of national welfare; and because it tends to change the policy of this Government for the past century, turn our attention from pursuits of peace to those of war, from internal to external affairs, entail upon us the enormous annual expense of a great standing army and navy

to compete first with any nation of the earth, and then with all nations combined.

But it will be said that this is anticipating the march of events. This is true, but there is no calling or business in life where we are not called upon to and should consider the probable future consequences of our present acts. Are they not reasonable deductions? The history of the world shows that, once let a people become drunk with the spirit of conquest, and the government, under the inexorable law of nature, with the desire of acquisition, accretion, and power, advances with rapid strides, and there is no limit to which it will not go and but few things it will hesitate to do, giving as a reason, more or less plausible, that it is a necessity. This is illustrated by the circumstances attending the consideration of the pending resolutions.

Six months ago it was conceded that the Senate, to which the treaty of annexation had been sent and which first had jurisdiction of this whole matter, should be allowed to complete its consideration; and it was a mooted question whether the resolutions could command the requisite constitutional majority either in the Senate or in the House. But no sooner is the victory of Manila chronicled than the Republican majority goes wild in its demand for immediate consideration by this House, and individual members of that party almost tumble over each other in their eagerness to be counted as the original friends of annexation. The Speaker's opposition is ignored and his counsel disregarded, and for the first time since his election as Speaker he finds himself without support inside of his own party. Now the resolutions will command an overwhelming majority; the result to be that jingoes and annexationists, flushed by their victory, will be looking across the horizon into the Eastern Hemisphere for other fields to conquer and annex.

Where shall we stop? How would propositions to annex the revolutionary Republics of Central and South America with their Spanish-American people strike the rabid annexationists? Would they not go equally wild in their vociferous declamations as to the great advantages to be derived from controlling everything in the Western Hemisphere? Are not the reasons for the annexation of such countries much stronger? They are contiguous to our own country and have a larger population and greater commercial advantages. Yet in their sober moments our people do not want these countries; but let the spirit of annexation and conquest grow and fatten upon what it feeds on, and who shall say where this aggressive spirit now abroad in the land will stop?

But it is said again that the permanent annexation of Hawaii, the Philippine Islands, Cuba, or Puerto Rico, or any or all of them, does not necessarily lead to a spirit of aggression and conquest for the world. This I grant, that it does not necessarily do so, but it inevitably does tend in that direction. A feather cast upon the spring branch may not be carried out to old ocean, but unless obstructed by outside matters it will go there. Just so surely will the unrestrained lust of conquest bring us to demand a slice in the partition of all territory in Europe, Asia, Africa, and all of the islands of the sea, placing our demand upon the ground that we are a first-class nation.

Fraught with what consequences is such a policy for the American people! The most vivid imagination can not measure the probable length and depth of such a policy. Alexander-like, may

we not weep for other worlds to conquer, and dying leave our world to anarchy and to ruin? Should we not heed the dying advice of Augustus Cæsar, the first and wisest of Rome's Emperors? Gibbon says that on the death of that Emperor his testament was publicly read in the Senate, and that he bequeathed as a valuable legacy to his successors the advice of confining the Empire within those limits which nature seemed to have placed as its bulwarks and boundaries.

A Republic such as ours is intended primarily for the encouragement and promotion of peace, liberty, and happiness among our own people. Our mission is to enlighten and hold aloft the torch of freedom snatched from monarchical hands, and not to conquer and appropriate foreign nations, tribes, and peoples, and the more we depart from this time-honored policy so much the more will we strengthen the executive at the expense of the legislative branch of the Government. Prior to the present war who dreamed that any considerable following in the United States would ever demand that this Government should permanently occupy and hold the Philippine Islands in the eastern hemisphere?

Now, a very large number of people demand that we should hold the Philippine Islands as inviolably a part of our territory as we would California or any other State, and treat with contempt the claim of conservative men that they should be held for indemnity for war expenses. News like the following from a daily newspaper is eagerly sought after and indorsed and followed by the growing army of annexationists:

> From information just come to light it appears that the Administration has finally determined upon a state policy concerning the Philippines. It is the evident intention of this Government to annex the islands and thus inaugurate a system of territorial expansion which shall broaden the interests of the nation to an extent not hitherto dreamed of, and plant our flag upon the seas.
>
> It develops now that this policy of the East has not been hurriedly formulated. It was considered and outlined even before Admiral Dewey seized the Philippines, and will be made operative as soon as the annexation of Hawaii has been accomplished. Not until this has been done will the Administration proclaim its Philippine policy.

I concede there are reasons from a commercial standpoint why the United States should control the Hawaiian Islands, and prior to the present war, when the matter was receiving dispassionate consideration, I felt very much inclined to support the proposed annexation. I concede that it is advisable to have a coaling station midway the Pacific. I concede that we should control the Nicaraguan Canal, if it is ever built, and everything that pertains to it; but when I realize that this step is now put forward as an infant's step, to be followed by the giant's strides for conquest and attempted colonization, I am forced to stop and consider whether it is not wiser to at once enter our protest, feeble as it may be, against the entering wedge which may lift the foundation stones of the Republic from their resting place of a century and institute a radical departure from the time-honored traditions and practices of this country. This tendency is well illustrated by a leading editorial in one of the prominent and influential journals of the day, and which I here insert as a part of my remarks:

> If we must now establish a necessary and vital, as distinguished from their own falsely assumed Hunker "traditional" policy, let us set at work about

it at once. We have an excellent opportunity to do so. The Hawaiian Islands are of the "ground hog" and not of the "traditional" kind of necessity to us. We must have them for purposes of the Navy coaling, the protection of our Pacific coast, and the Nicaraguan Canal. We will have them!

That being accomplished, it may be predicted that the ice of our "traditional policy" will be broken, and that narrow provincialism, once having wet its feet, will be induced to wet its hip pockets, and then to wade to the other side of the stream.

To the devil with "traditional" policies which are only invoked to keep America in the condition of a country school district! This is a great world nation with a grand possession in the Chinese seas. Before the week is out it will have other possessions in the Antilles. And it will keep and defend all that it gets.

It will be seen that we are not to confine ourselves to the Western Hemisphere; even North, Central, and South America, with all of their adjacent islands and possessions, are not sufficient. In the language of the editorial, it is claimed that "this is a great world nation, with a grand possession in the Chinese seas"—no pent-up Utica to confine our efforts, but, "like a Colossus, to bestride the world." High-sounding phrases these, but whence do they lead? Has not the time come to consider whither we are drifting—to hesitate and to halt? "Fools rush in where angels fear to tread." Let us not act in haste and repent at leisure.

Why should Hawaii and the Philippine Islands become permanently a part of the United States? They are both agricultural if they are anything. They will furnish no market for any portion of the agricultural products of this country; on the contrary, very many of their products will come into competition with those of the United States. It may be that these islands have no manufactures, and as the Chinese tariff wall now surrounding this country would be enlarged to take in these new possessions, the protected manufacturers would have these people added as additional victims.

The population of these islands is not desirable. It is composed chiefly of natives, Chinese, Japanese, and Malays, as follows, according to the census of 1896:

| Population. | Number. | Population. | Number. |
|---|---|---|---|
| Hawaiians (pure and mixed) | 39,504 | Portuguese | 15,291 |
| Japanese | 25,407 | Americans | 3,080 |
| Chinese | 21,616 | British | 2,250 |
| | | Germans | 1,432 |

The majority of those in the Philippines are said to be little more than savages. A few years ago Congress absolutely forbid the further importation of Chinese into this country, passed laws restricting immigration, and there is now pending upon the Calendar of this House a bill to further restrict immigration. By the resolutions now under consideration and other measures to follow, it is proposed to incorporate into our population Chinese, Japanese, Malays, and a people classed as half savages. It is not desirable that they should come into competition with the labor of this country. They are not desirable in any respect as citizens. They are not capitalists, or well-to-do, substantial citizens; their labor is of an inferior kind, and they make a small per cent of the wages commanded by labor in this country. Many of the population of the Hawaiian Islands are afflicted with leprosy, and spe-

cial provision is made in territory for that class of unfortunates. The plague ridden districts and the jungles of the Philippine Islands are even more to be dreaded.

Put the annexation of Hawaii is urged, first, as a commercial necessity; that the commercial bird shall have a place midway the Pacific to rest its weary wing and take on additional supplies. The answer might be, we have progressed very well for a hundred years without these islands; but the answer is, taking the argument as sound, we already have such a place in Pearl Harbor on the islands—ours by treaty right. The bugbear that the annexationists seek to frighten us with—that if we do not annex these islands some foreign country will—is but a will-o-the-wisp, because, under the Monroe doctrine as now enlarged and construed, we are as fully committed to resist the encroachment of any foreign country into the Western Hemisphere as if we owned the islands. But, secondly, it is urged as a military necessity, and a great deal of military authority is quoted in its support, much of it respectable and entitled to great weight, but some of it attracting attention only by reason of the high-sounding titles attached to the self-constituted Solomons.

This country has waged a number of wars successfully without these islands. Instead of being a source of strength, to own and be responsible for outlying islands 2,000 miles from our shores, it entails added responsibility and is a source of weakness, military experts to the contrary notwithstanding. This is well illustrated by the present war with Spain. Have her islands been a source of strength or weakness to her? To ask the question suggests the negative answer to every sensible man.

Señor Sagasta, the premier of Spain, in an interview published a few days ago, said:

> Our colonies have cost us dear. Within the last twenty-five years we have spent in them 3,000,000,000 francs in defensive works. Only the most important cities and points have been fortified, as we could not erect works everywhere. The cost would have been 7,000,000,000 or 8,000,000,000 francs.

Spain is struggling—struggling, oh, how desperately—to hold islands thousands of miles from her shores which she has owned for many years! Shall we repeat the story? Shall we annex the Philippines and Hawaii, all thousands of miles from us? How easy, in case of war, for an enemy to attack those islands, hundreds in number, with its fleet! We might have the greatest navy in the world, but we need it all to defend our Atlantic and Pacific seacoasts, stretching thousands of miles. How easy for a foreign fleet to swoop down upon those distant possessions beyond the seas!

One of the strongest arguments in favor of the annexation of the Hawaiian Islands is that, being located in the Western Hemisphere, we would not consent under the Monroe doctrine to allow any other country in the Eastern to annex them, and, being responsible to some extent for them, it might be better to annex them. This same argument, however, would apply to all the Central and South American so-called Republics, and no one has had the hardihood so far to claim that they should be incorporated into our body politic.

As to the Philippines—and it is proper to consider them in the same connection, for they all form part and parcel of the same general policy—they lie in the Eastern Hemisphere, 8,000 miles from our shores, and off the coast of China and Japan. What is

to become of our cherished Monroe doctrine, that European nations can not extend their possessions in the Western Hemisphere, if we assert our right to extend our possessions into the Eastern Hemisphere? Can we assert our exclusive right to the Western Hemisphere and not extend the same right to European nations as to the Eastern? If we do not, may it not, and will it not, in the natural course of events, lead us, perhaps, into the greatest war the world has ever seen?

I shall vote against the pending resolutions for the annexation of Hawaii, not because I can see no reason for their annexation, but because I consider the reasons against action at the present time outweigh those in favor of immediate action. This question should be postponed until this war is concluded, and the annexation of outlying islands and the embarkation upon a policy of colonial extension and expansion should be a matter of serious and careful deliberation, to be entered upon, if at all, by Congress only in time of peace and after the sense of the people is taken upon the subject.

I know these resolutions will be adopted by the House and, I suppose, by the Senate. They will become a law, and when the Hawaiian Islands are added to our territory we will protect and defend them as any other part of our cherished territory. Once added, nothing can separate. The arbitrament of war has decided this, and I would not change the fiat in this respect. We are loyal citizens of a common country, and will uphold and defend our common flag against the nations of the world. I would, however, that we might go slow in this new departure. I would that a general election might be held before these questions are pressed to a conclusion. Other matters claimed the attention of the people at the last election; another one is to be held in a few months, and then the Representatives, fresh from the people, could be instructed. But this is not to be. The Hawaiian Islands will be annexed; but let the Representatives know the will of the people as to the new spirit of aggression and annexation which would plunge us headlong into complications with the balance of the world, the end whereof no man can foresee.

This is not the first time that an island with an undesirable population has sought to be annexed to the United States. In 1883 Haiti, an island much nearer to our shores, sought annexation by this Government. Mr. Frelinghuysen, the then Secretary of State, replied that—

> The policy of this Government, as declared on many occasions in the past, has tended toward the avoidance of possessions disconnected with the main continent. Had the tendency of the United States been to extend territorial dominion beyond intervening seas, opportunities have not been wanting to effect such a purpose, whether on the coast of Africa, in the West Indies, or in the South Pacific. No such opportunity has been hitherto embraced, and but little hope could be offered that Congress, which must in the ultimate resort be brought to decide the question of such transmarine jurisdiction, would favorably regard such an acquisition as his excellency proposes. At any rate, in its political aspect merely, this Government is unprepared to accept the proposition without the subjection to such wishes as Congress and the people of the United States through Congress may see fit to express.

In 1884 Mr. Bayard, the then Secretary of State, wrote our minister to Germany, Mr. Pendleton, as follows:

> The policy of the United States, declared and pursued for more than a century, discountenances, and in practice forbids, distant colonial acquisitions. Our action in the past, touching the acquisition of territory by purchase and cession, and our recorded disinclination to avail ourselves of vol

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[illegible] territory under the sovereignty [illegible] historical prominence.

Our [illegible] to the annexation of distant territory was very [illegible] by President Cleveland in his first message to Congress, as follows:

[illegible] of precedents from Washington's [illegible] with foreign States. I do not favor [illegible] distant territory or the incorporation [illegible]

I [illegible] by the Monroe doctrine. Let us not covet the [illegible] Hemisphere. Let the world know we wish to be at peace, [illegible] guarding and defending our own territory, while we [illegible] others in the Eastern what we so jealously claim for [illegible] in the Western Hemisphere. If we do this, I shall not [illegible] the annexation of Hawaii as an unmixed evil, but fearing [illegible] to be made a precedent for worse to come, I would halt until [illegible] winged peace fans and cools our fevered imagination and [illegible] to normal conditions.

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